

FREAK ACCIDENT

Stroke survivor shares his story

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If Londoners know Carmi Levy, they know him as a journalist on the cutting edge of social media who is also Canada's leading tech analyst. What they don't know is that for a year now, the 47-year-old Forest City resident has felt extra-lucky just to be alive.

**Carmi Levy**

That's because last summer, he almost died.

"I felt like I had been through the wrong end of a Spanish bullfight," Levy says of the stroke that felled him

on Aug. 5, 2013.

"And when it's an injury to your brain, it opens up a whole new world of fear."

At the time, the writer familiar for his TV and radio appearances didn't know what was happening. He was grilling some chicken on his back deck when he felt faint.

He had had a bad headache earlier in the day, which began when he twisted his neck awkwardly doing a U-turn during a 45-kilometre bike ride in the countryside north of London. "And I don't get headaches," he explained.

In his words, "everything went haywire" as he stood over the barbecue flipping chicken. Inside the house, his wife saw him crumple to the deck.

"I couldn't pull myself back up, but I didn't know why," Levy said.

As his family crowded around him, calling 911 and rushing to

his side, the man who makes a living by his words realized he was a prisoner in his own body. He could think clearly, but his speech was limited to "yes," "no," and "OK."

He was fully conscious, but had lost — in an instant — verbal control.

What Levy's neurology team at University Hospital discovered later is that when he twisted his neck, he had severed his carotid artery, which threw a blood clot into his brain. This wasn't a stroke that had anything to do with poor health or a lousy lifestyle. "They said it was a freak accident," Levy recalled.

Levy wasn't in the hospital long, just one night. Within a few hours, his symptoms started to reverse themselves. "By the next morning, I was able to function," he said.

But it was during that brief stay that he decided he wanted to inform others about what his brush with death taught him.

"It almost made me feel like I had a duty to share this," he said.

Hence his new book, *And God Snapped His Fingers*. The volume is currently in manuscript form, as Levy prepares to find a publisher for it. Though his doctors ordered him to rest his brain when he went home, he started mentally composing the 50 life lessons that make up the book within a week.

How does he want readers to respond? "I want them to value the things they wouldn't normally value," he said. "It sounds Utopian, but at the same time it has to start somewhere. Why not with me?"